UNIT 4: TEXT AND DISCOURSE

UNIT STRUCTURE

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4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- grasp the distinctiveness of sentence, text and discourse
- appreciate the qualities of a text in terms of correctness, clarity, etc.
- discriminate between text and discourse
- appreciate the structures of different forms of texts

4.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall deal with the concepts of *sentence, text* and *discourse* and related issues of the text notably their structures or forms. We begin by making a reference to the structure of the sentence which we refer to as the largest unit of grammatical description as the starting point for a discussion of the structures of the text and discourse. You will understand that a piece of text has certain distinctive characteristics notably *correctness* in the use of sentence structures and marks of punctuation; focus on *grammaticality* and *appropriateness*. Besides, a piece of text must have *clarity, cohesion* and *coherence.* We shall look at techniques by which a piece of text can be considered to have correctness and clarity, cohesion and coherence.

Another area of concern in this unit is the concept of discourse. We draw a distinction between text and discourse by placing discourse in language as process whereas text as the product of language. We draw points of reference between the structure of the paragraph and that of units larger than the paragraph.

4.3 SENTENCE, TEXT AND DISCOURSE

In our grammar books we had learnt the concept of the sentence as the largest unit of grammatical description. We had analysed the syntactic structure of the sentence in terms of words, phrases and clauses. In this section, we take the sentence as the starting point of our discussion on text and discourse.

4.3.1 The Sentence

In a discussion on text and discourse, it is useful to begin with the concept of the sentence for the simple reason that the sentence occupies two interesting positions in text and discourse. On the one hand, it is the largest unit of grammatical description while, on the other, it is referred to as the minimal unit of language activity. As the largest structural unit in terms of

which the grammar of a language is organized, a classification on the sentence can focus on two areas of activity – its structure and its functions. Approaches to structure proceed along many different lines, the most common one for pedagogical purpose being identification of a hierarchy of its elements in terms of *morpheme—word – phrase – clause – sentence*.

Another issue of concern is the identification of the sentence in a piece of text. In written language, it is fairly straightforward: we know that a sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with an end-punctuation mark (a full stop, a note of interrogation or a sign of exclamation). In speech where intonation and pauses may give certain clues as to where a sentence boundary exists, it becomes important to have some knowledge of these features of the language for better communication.

4.3.2 The Text

A text is a piece of spoken or written language activity that belongs to the semantic system of the language. A text is realized through sentences though it is possible to have fragmentary bits of messages like

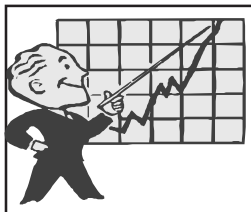
- NO SMOKING
- SILENCE
- KEEP OF THE GRASS
- WEAK BRIDGE DRIVE SLOW

or newspaper headlines like TEN KILLED THIRTY INJURED as texts. What is important to remember is that texts may refer to collections of spoken or written material ranging from (a) warning signs, (b) road signs or hoardings (c) news stories, (d) conversation between two participants or (e) any written or printed or spoken communication. Each of these pieces of texts requires to be encoded for meaning. Thus, text is a semantic unit used in discourse. We can define a text as a communicative occurrence which meets some standards of textuality notably, cohesion and coherence.

4.3.3 Discourse

Discourse is a general term to refer to the use of language as process. We may call it a piece of language that has been produced as a result of an act

of communication. Whereas grammar refers to the rules of a language that operate in the formation of grammatical units such as phrases and clauses and sentences, discourse refers to larger units of language such as paragraphs, conversations and interviews. The basic difference between a text and a discourse is that discourse in language is a process whereas text is the product of a language activity. Discourse is what conceptualizes in the minds of the participants of the discourse as a part of the language activity. Discourse subsumes the text as well as the context.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. Answer the following questions:

(a) What do you mean by the hierarchical structure of a sentence?

(b) Briefly draw a distinction between text and discourse.

(c) How is grammar related to discourse?

4.4 QUALITIES OF A TEXT

The qualities of a text are discussed in the following sub-sections :

4.4.1 Correctness

One of the most important features of a text is grammatical correctness, which refers to whether a sentence structure is formally possible or not. It is concerned with whether the language permits a structure as grammatically possible or rejects it as ungrammatical. Grammar provides the logical framework without which communication in any language would be impossible. Imagine a young news writer covering a fire disaster reporting the incident as follows:

**A massive fire has destroyed a thirty-six storey building in Central London last night. The fire caused a lot of damages.*

The first sentence uses a wrong verb form. When we use the time adverbial ‘last night’, we cannot use a present perfect tense form of the verb; instead, we use the simple past tense. Secondly, the word ‘massive’ is inappropriate here. The word does not collocate with fire; the word to use

here could be *big/huge/devastating*. In the second sentence, the word damages is not correct. The word 'damage' is an uncountable noun that cannot be pluralized with the plural marker –s. Thus, grammaticality is the permissible ways by which words can be organized in a sentence structure.

Hence, along with grammaticality, there is another feature that can be seen as a feature of the text. It is appropriateness to the context or situation. A sentence can be grammatically feasible and possible but can still be unacceptable if it is not appropriate to a situation. We cannot say :

**The road was not large enough for the fire brigade to enter and hence the accident broke out.*

When we are talking about distances from one side to the other, we use *wide* or *broad* but not *large*. The phrasal verb 'broke out' is rather unusual with accident. We say fire broke out, malaria broke out but accident *occurred/took place/happened*.

In order to achieve acceptability, a text has to be grammatical and appropriate in the use of punctuation and capital letters. Read the following text with the punctuation and capital letters missing.

The cabinet secretariat has recently issued a directive to private secretaries of the concerned ministers in this regard it has been decided that smart phones mobile phones will henceforth not be permitted inside the meeting venues of cabinet committees it said.

Here is the version of the passage with the punctuation marks and capitals incorporated.

The Cabinet Secretariat has recently issued a directive to private secretaries of the concerned ministers in this regard.

"It has been decided that smart phones/mobile phones will henceforth not be permitted inside the meeting venues of Cabinet Committees," it said.

This version is definitely comprehensible as a text.

4.4.2 Clarity

Clarity is a distinctive feature of a piece of text. There are three aspects to clear communication.

- Being clear about what we want to state
- Being clear in the way we want to state it, and
- Ensuring that what appears clear to us will be equally clear to the person who receives the message.

(a) Being clear about what we want to state:

Thinking is an integral part of spoken or written communication. It becomes easier to write something when we have time to think clearly about what we want to write and the purpose for which we are writing. If we intend to write a text of any length, we require source material. It is helpful to think of a title for the composition that you intend to write. That narrows down our search for the materials. If, for example, we intend to write about the tourist potential of Assam, you should look up some materials from different sources in order to add authenticity to our composition. Next, we should be able to organize in a logical way the material in our composition. Most importantly, we should make a plan as detailed as possible and form an idea as to what to write at each step of our composition.

(b) Being clear in the way we want to state:

Being clear in the way we want to state implies that we should be conscious of the techniques of presenting our thoughts with clarity. These techniques include a competence in ordering the words in a sentence. Sequencing of words becomes more important to the meaning of a sentence than anything else. We should be careful of loosely connected words and phrases. In general, descriptive words and phrases will draw meaning from the noun or verb that is nearest to it. Putting words in the wrong position will cause unintended associations that are either confusing or absurd. Here are two examples:

(i) I saw a dead cow walking on the road.

(ii) Did you see the portrait coming upstairs?

The problem with the first sentence is that it gives the impression that the information in the sentence is absurd. A dead body cannot walk on the road. Hence it becomes necessary to be clear about what you want to say by rephrasing the sentence with the words “while I was” before the words “walking on the road”. Similarly, in the second sentence you have to

clarify that it is not the portrait coming upstairs but the listener of this question by adding “while you were” before “coming upstairs”.

(c) Ensuring that what appears clear to you is also clear to others :

Though our writing may appear quite clear to us, we can never entirely be sure that it is clear and unambiguous to others too. We can understand our writings even when we miss out the linkers or other structural elements. Hence, there is the need for revising our text by looking at it more critically for dangling and misplaced phrases, redundant words and vagueness in our choice of words.

4.4.3 Cohesion

A piece of text is characterized by a cohesiveness or unity between the sentences. Cohesion is the relation of meaning that exists within and between the sentences which creates a text. We discover that a good piece of composition is marked by certain cohesive links or devices that can be either explicit or implicit. Explicit cohesive devices are also called overt connectives whereas implicit cohesive devices are called covert connectives.

Overt connectives often play the role of linkers in a piece of text. They are specific devices in writing whose main objective in a piece of composition is to ensure a smooth transition. They can be single words or group of words each performing certain definite function in the composition.

(a) Those that deal with a new aspect of the subject

And so

First,...second,....third,... etc.

Next

Then...

(b) Those that reinforce a point already made

Again,

Besides,

For example,

For instance,

Furthermore,

In addition,

Moreover,

(c) Those that introduce a difference or contrast

Alternatively

Although

Conversely

Despite this, however

In comparison

In contrast

In spite of this

Meanwhile,

Nevertheless

On the other hand,

Still

Yet

(d) Those that indicate similarity

Furthermore

Likewise

Moreover

Similarly

(e) Those that indicate result

Accordingly

And so

As a result

Consequently

Then

Therefore

Thus

(f) Those that indicate summary or restatement

In other words

In short

On the whole

To put it differently

Covert connectives are not explicitly stated in a sentence or in a passage. They are stated in so indirect a manner that one has to look for them to discover them. Pronouns and adverbs covertly build up a web of inter-connection between sentences. This is the objective of covert connectives. Such connectivity characterise a text.

4.4.4 Coherence

We derive the meaning of the text solely on the basis of the words and structures of the sentence used to convey the message. We can recognize grammaticality and appropriateness in the use of language from which we derive meaning. But we fail to grasp meaning of a piece of text when there is no coherence between the sentences. The term coherence is used to refer to the relationships which link the meanings of sentences in a piece of text. Coherence shows the relationship between the sentences in a paragraph and between paragraphs in a piece of composition. To illustrate this point, read the following passage:

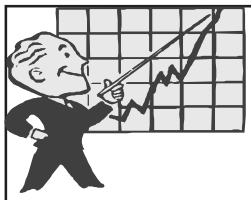
"The boys at school have just found out, and they are mocking me". "I am sure you have read his books about the house". Willie Chandran asked his father one day, "Why is my middle name Somerset?" His father said without joy, "You were named after a great English writer."

You will find that each of the sentences in the passage is correct. But somehow they do not make sense to you. What is lacking in them is coherence. Without coherence, a piece of writing fails to convey meaning. A good piece of writing is something more than an assembly of words or sentences. There should be coherence between these elements. Coherence between the sentences is missing in the passage above. Now, read the revised passage:

Willie Chandran asked his father one day, "Why is my middle name Somerset?" the boys at school have just found out and they are mocking me."

His father said without joy, “You were named after a great English writer. I am sure you have seen his books about the house.”

To be comprehensible, a text must have coherence between the units of composition. Coherence occurs when the interpretation of some elements in the text is dependent on the other elements. Thereby, we discover an inner connection between the sentences. This is coherence. The first passage is not coherent; it fails as a piece of text – it is a non-text. The second passage is coherent; it qualifies as a piece of text.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2. The following is a piece of text that lacks cohesion and coherence. Rewrite it in proper order.

No one could remember when the monsoon had been so late. And the summer was longer. It was hotter than usual and drier and dustier. Even the weather had a different feel in India that year. For weeks the sparse clouds cast only shadows. There was no rain. The summer of 1947 was not like other Indian summers.

4.5 STRUCTURE OF DISCOURSE

4.5.1 The Paragraph Structure

The structure of a paragraph can be a good starting point to discuss units of composition beyond the sentence. Just as a sentence can be discussed in terms of its structure, we can talk of different layers of structure while discussing a discourse. For example, we can discuss a paragraph in terms of these features: (a) a central controlling idea; (b) adequate development of the idea; and (c) coherent connections between parts of the paragraph. Here is a paragraph from a work of fiction:

It was Monday morning. Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes. He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar. After the delicious freedom of Saturday and Sunday, it was difficult to get into the Monday mood of work and discipline. He shuddered at the very thought of

school: that dismal yellow building; the fire-eyed Vedanayagam, his class-teacher; and the headmaster with his thin long cane.

The central controlling idea of the paragraph is that it was a Monday morning and Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes. The idea as to his reluctance to open his eyes is adequately developed all through the paragraph with the author pointing to several reasons why he detests Monday mornings – the delicious freedom of Saturday and Sunday and his bitterness towards his school. There are coherent connections between the parts of the paragraph guiding us smoothly from one sentence to the next.

4.5.2 Structure Beyond the Paragraph

We take the essay as an example of a piece of discourse beyond the paragraph. Generally, an essay can be divided into three parts: the introduction, the body and conclusion. The first paragraph of an essay is the introduction and the last paragraph is the conclusion; the paragraphs in between constitute the body.

Let us look at the introduction of an essay. The introduction serves two purposes:

- to interest the reader and
- to lead him/her into the topic.

The introduction should arrest the reader's attention and show the reader what you are writing about and why. There are different ways by which you can make a presentation of the introduction of the essay. Let us look at a few of them.

1. *Opening paragraph as a direct statement*

It was midday in a small settlement on the river Ogowe in West Africa. Into the jungle nearby floated the sound of music... (G. F. Lamb)

2. *Opening paragraph as a starting statement*

August 6, 1945 – the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima – brought home to all of us in a dramatic fashion the significance of science in human life. (Marcel Junod)

3. *Opening paragraph as anecdote*

Some time ago I was watching what must be the strangest group of refugees in this country... (Gerald Durrell)

The main body of the essay may consist of several paragraphs and comprise *statement, elucidation* and *comment*. There will be information to support the main argument of the essay. It collects together and elucidates the ideas promised in the first paragraph. It also comments on the ideas to support the view put forward there. The last paragraph of the essay is the conclusion. The conclusion begins with a restatement of the main argument of the essay.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3. (a) Write a paragraph on "A scene in an examination hall".

(b) Write an essay on a book that you have read.



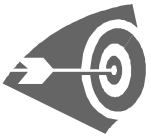
4.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed the concepts of *sentence, text* and *discourse* and related issues of the text notably their structures or forms. We began with the structure of the sentence which we referred to as the largest unit of grammatical description and noted its inter-connectedness with the structures of the text and discourse. We examined the features of a piece of text by referring to *correctness* in the use of sentence structures and marks of punctuation; focus on *grammaticality* and *appropriateness*. Besides, we referred to features of a piece of text notably *clarity, cohesion* and *coherence* and the techniques by which a piece of text can have correctness and clarity, cohesion and coherence. Another area of concern that we referred to in this unit is the concept of discourse. We drew a distinction between text and discourse by placing discourse in language as process whereas text as the product of language. We also drew points of reference between the structure of a paragraph and that of units larger than a paragraph.



4.7 FURTHER READING

1. Beaugrande, Robert de & Dressler, Wolfgang. (1981). *Introduction to Text Linguistics,* Longman.
2. Brown, Gillian & Yule, George. (1983). *Discourse Analysis,* Cambridge.
3. Edmondson, Willis. (1981). *Spoken Discourse: A model for Analysis,* Longman.



4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q1.

(a) A sentence can be analysed in terms of its hierarchical structure. In this approach a five-rank hierarchy is used. The ranks are: *sentence – clause – phrase – word – morpheme*. According to this description, morphemes are units smaller than the word.

(b) A text is a semantic unit which is realized in sentences. A text is to the semantic system what a clause is to the grammatical system. We can call it a communicatve occurrence that meets several standards of textuality notably cohesion, coherence, clarity, correctness, etc. It is different from discourse in the sense that a discourse is a process while a text is a product of language activity. Discourse is what obtains in the mind of the participants of a discourse. The relationship between the participants of a discourse can also enable them to modify and organize their discourse in terms of formality, semi-formality and informality in the use of language.

(c) Grammar is related to discourse in an interesting way. Both are connected with the language structures. But whereas grammar is concerned with the structure of sentences by taking the sentence as the largest unit of grammatical description, discourse is concerned with the structure of units larger than the sentence.

Ans to Q2.

The summer of 1947 was not like other Indian summers. Even the weather had a different feel in India that year. It was hotter than usual, and drier and dustier. And the summer was longer. No one could remember when the monsoon had been so late. For weeks, the sparse clouds cast only shadows. There was no rain.

Ans to Q3.

Try yourself.

4.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. Give brief answers to the following questions:

(a) Explain the two interesting positions that a sentence occupies in the study of text and discourse.

(b) Explain how sentence boundaries are identified in speech.

(c) Discuss overt connectives with suitable examples.

(d) Give an example of covert connective.

Q2. Answer the following questions:

(a) State the hierarchy of the sentence structure.

(b) Explain the term cohesion.

(c) Explain the structure of a paragraph

Q3. Answer the following essay-type questions:

(a) Distinguish between text and discourse.

(b) Discuss two distinct features of a text.

(c) Discuss the features of discourse.

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UNIT 5: APPLIED LINGUISTICS

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 The Nature and Scope of Applied Linguistics

5.4 Second Language Learning

5.5 Contrastive Analysis

- 5.5.1 Assumptions of Contrastive Analysis
- 5.5.2 Criticism on Contrastive Analysis

5.6 Error Analysis

- 5.6.1 Types of Errors
- 5.6.2 Error Analysis as a Pedagogic Tool
- 5.6.3 Methodology of Error Analysis

5.7 Let us Sum up

5.8 Further Reading

5.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.10 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- appreciate the nature and scope of applied linguistics
- define and describe the theories of second language learning
- explain contrastive analysis
- appreciate the importance of error analysis in language learning

5.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the concept of applied linguistics to familiarise you with a few issues in this field of study. We define the term as the application of the concepts, principles and theories of linguistics to other related fields of study. This definition throws light on the scope of applied

linguistics besides its multi-disciplinary character. Thereby, we become aware of its extensive field. It is a field encompassing a broad range of language activities including English Language Teaching (ELT) which will be our primary concern in this unit.

Next, the unit draws a distinction between L1 and L2 learning by showing that while the L1 is acquired in a natural language learning environment, the L2 is learnt through a conscious process. We shall discuss the processes of L2 learning by considering the applications of the principles of behaviourism. We shall also take up the applications of the cognitive theory of L2 learning that prepares the ground for the next two sections where a discussion is presented on contrastive analysis and error analysis.

5.3 THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS

While defining the term 'applied linguistics' we begin with the word *linguistics*. It is defined as the scientific study of the systems and principles underlying language. It is the one field of study that can offer insights into the issues and real-life problems related to language. The other word *applied* refers to the application of the concepts, principles and theories of linguistics to other related fields of study. Thereby, applied linguistics offers solutions to issues and real-life problems.

The scope of applied linguistics can best be explained by referring to the following issues and concerns related to its field:

(a) Language problems in developing nations: These problems have arisen out of the linguistic consequences of colonialism, national language problems, literacy programmes among others.

(b) Language and society : The area of concern is the relationship of language and society. It addresses issues on language varieties, speech communities, dialect studies, standard language and register among others taken up in the field of *sociolinguistics*.

(c) Language and mind: The area of concern is the study on the relation between language and the individuals' behaviour and capabilities in

affective variables like interest and motivation on the one hand and language acquisition in children on the other taken up in the field of *psycholinguistics.*

(d) Language teaching and learning: The area of concern is the study of various issues of language teaching and learning ranging from syllabus design, materials production to teaching and evaluation.

(e) Communication and interaction: It is a vast field covering areas like *discourse analysis, stylistics, translation, lexicography* among others.

Thus, we discover the extensive scope of 'applied linguistics' encompassing a broad range of language activities.

Secondly, we understand that applied linguistics is an inter-disciplinary field drawing on disciplines like sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, pedagogy and linguistics in dealing with problems of language teaching and learning. The field is practical in nature without losing sight of the theories of general linguistics.

Moreover, we understand that applied linguistics explores the relation between theory and practice with particular reference to language teaching. It is a practically oriented field and at the same time, theory-driven. Various language learning theories have given a direction to the practical orientation of the field of ELT.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. Answer the following questions briefly:

(a) Define the term applied linguistics.

(b) State briefly why applied linguistics is considered inter-disciplinary.

(c) Briefly list the areas of ELT.

5.4 SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

In general terms, the term "second language" refers to any language other than the learners' mother tongue or first language (L1) that the learners acquire. In specific terms, the term "second language" in the context of the three language formula adopted by the National Policy on Education refers

to English wherein the learners' first language is invariably the first language that they learn in the home environment. Here our focus is on learning English as second language (L2). But before that, it would be important to see what exactly is involved in learning the first language.

While considering the child's acquisition of language between the ages of about twelve months and five years, the most interesting thing that we may observe is the child's learning process. How does that happen? It has now been accepted that the early language environment that children are exposed to plays an important part in their learning the L1. This language environment consists of a speech environment provided to them by their parents, elders and other children to acquire their L1. The term acquisition refers to the process by which a learner learns the L1 as the development of the L1 is an innate ability. This claim has given rise to the following notions:

1. Children are born with innately endowed capabilities to build up for themselves the 'knowledge' of their first language.
2. They do not have to be taught the rules of their L1 or corrected for their mistakes
3. They learn language by being exposed to it.
4. Linguistic rules develop unconsciously.

Thus, based on mere exposure to a language community, children invent the grammar of the concerned language for themselves with no significant language related inputs. The foundation of the L1 is laid unconsciously. Subsequently, they receive formal inputs by which they build on to what they had been exposed to leading to a proficiency in the language.

However, the process by which children acquire and gain proficiency in their L2, is far from being an unconscious process. It is a conscious process. We note that the environmental circumstance of L2 learning differ systematically from L1 learning. Discussions on the process of the child's L2 learning have always been guided by the fundamental issues of a set of theories of language learning. The theory of L2 learning that had gained popularity in the 50s and 60s of the last century was the behaviourist theory. Here we shall briefly bring out its implications to language learning.

(a) A language is learnt only through imitation and an exposure to the language.

(b) The more a learner gets the opportunity to use and practice the language, the more he/she learns the language.

(c) Language is always used with reference to a particular context or situation and hence the full meaning of a language unit is known only when the situation is known.

(d) The situation may be real (actual or recalled) or contrived (visualised or a verbal context).

(e) Oral communication is the most natural use of language and that is made use of in L2 learning. The spoken language comes earlier than the written language.

(f) Selection and gradation of language items should form the basis of the teaching/learning experience so that what to teach and how much to teach and especially how to teach become a useful framework for the teaching/learning experience.

The cognitive view of language learning, on the other hand, would not like to explain language learning purely in terms of imitation. If it were so, it would not be possible to account for the utterances that the child had produced without hearing them before. The child had heard sentence structures like:

(i) This is a book.

(ii) This is a ball.

But surely, it had not heard the sentence given below.

(iii) *This is a white.

(iv) *This is a went.

How did the child produce such a sentence? According to the cognitive view of language learning, the learner possesses some kind of mechanism that processes the language data. The output from this action is a system of language rules which allows the learner to produce other sentences.

It is important to state that since the child's exposure to the language is limited and gradual, it is not in a position to formulate all the rules of the language that would make it possible to construct a number of well-formed sentences. If the learner makes errors at this stage of learning, these errors

are merely developmental errors. The rules that it makes with its limited input would get modified with more input.

According to the cognitive view, repetition and practice have been considerably devalued as language learning strategies. In their place hypothesis formation and problem-solving have been emphasised.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2. Fill up the blanks:

(a) L1 learning is an _____ process.

(b) Every normal child has an _____ language learning faculty.

(c) L1 children acquire their language by being _____ to it.

(d) Based on their exposure to their language, learners _____ a grammar of the language.

(e) Repetition and practice constitute the main strategies of the_____ theory of learning.

5.5 CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

The mistakes or errors that learners make have been a concern that had led towards a systematic study on errors in an effort to account for their linguistic and psychological origin, regularity, predictability, variability and so on. The concept of *contrastive analysis* (CA) of learners' errors is such an effort that was developed and practised in the 1950s and 1960s and had been guided by the theoretical assumptions of the structural approach and the behaviourist theory of language learning.

5.5.1 Assumptions of Contrastive Analysis

The term *contrastive* refers to a comparison. In the present context, the comparison is of the linguistic systems of two languages, for example, the sound system or the grammatical system followed by an analysis of the distinctive features of the learners' L1 and L2.

One of the assumptions of CA is that the main difficulties of learning a new language are caused by the *interference* from the L1. It was hypothesised that a substantial number of learners' errors can be due to the interference coming from the learners' first language (L1). It is a phenomenon which has been referred to as *the pull of the mother tongue.* The term implies that when learners acquire their L1 /mother tongue they begin as it were, with a clean slate. As they acquire the language – its forms, meanings and their associations get impressed in their minds. When they begin to learn a second language (L2) they carry over the language pattern of their L1 into their target language (L2) performance. In psychological terms, this is known as *transfer* – meaning that when they use the L2, they transfer the language habits that they had already acquired to the L2.

Another assumption is that the errors of L2 learners are chiefly due to the differences between the structural patterns or the sound pattern of their L1 and L2. The greater these differences are, the more acute the learning difficulties will be. Learners' deviation in the use of language from the norm of the L2 occurs as a result of their bilingual or multilingual habits accounting for their familiarity with more than one language. This assumption had led to the argument that a contrastive analysis of the structural framework of the two languages is needed to predict and to make explicit the difficulties and errors of L2 learners.

5.5.2 Criticism on Contrastive Analysis

Research findings have provided the evidence of a number of limitations and shortcomings of the contrastive analysis hypothesis. These studies have shown that the developmental structures of first and second language learners are similar. More significantly, L2 learners make the same kind of errors that L1 learners make.

As against these findings the contrastive analysis had hypothesized that the major source of errors is supposed to be due to the difference between the structural features of the learners' L1 and L2. Thus while

learning syntax of the L2, the learners tend to use the structure of their L1. But it has been seen that the L2 errors of learners are similar to their L1 errors. This evidence rules out the argument that the errors of L2 learners are due to the interference of their L1. Thus, interference as the primary source of errors as argued by contrastive analysis has been questioned.

Moreover, the argument of language transfer as hypothesized by contrastive analysis, have been questioned. That is, the automatic transfer of L1 structure due to habit onto the structure of the L2 is virtually non-existent. Studies of L2 acquisition have ended to imply that CA may be most predictive at the level of speech. It is logical that bilingual speakers tend to be influenced by the sound system of their L1 when they use L2 in oral communication.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3. Answer the following questions:

(a) What is contrasted in contrastive analysis?

(b) Explain the term L1 interference.

(c) Explain the terms bilingual and bilingualism.

(d) Explain the terms multilingual and multilingualism

5.6 ERROR ANALYSIS

With the advent of *contrastive analysis* (CA) and its claim to predict and explain some major types of errors, there has grown a serious interest in learners' errors. Primarily the question as to what is an error has been engaging the minds of the scholars. Various terms like *slips*, *lapses, mistakes* and *errors* are currently in use. These terms generally mean the use of a word or a grammatical item either in speech or in writing in a way which is considered faulty. Pit Corder, in his paper titled "The Significance of Learners' Errors"(1967) makes a distinction between *errors of performance* and *errors of competence*.

5.6.1 Types of Errors

Errors of performance include slips, lapses and mistakes. Slips are made by a learner when writing or speaking and which result from a lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness or some other aspect of performance. We often refer to slip of the pen or slip of the tongue. We would not make these slips if we are a bit careful. Similarly, lapses and mistakes are also errors of performance that may often result from memory lapses, fatigue or emotional strain or even a failure to match the language to the situation resulting in inappropriate utterance. Errors of performance will characteristically be unsystematic and it is meaningless to formulate rules to overcome them.

Errors of competence on the other hand, will be systematic. Primarily, the significance of these errors is that we obtain from them evidence of the system of the language that the learner is using or has learnt at a particular point in the course of learning. Secondly, they provide to the researcher evidence on how language is learnt or acquired, what strategies or procedure the learners are employing in the learning of the language. Thirdly, they are important to the learners themselves because they provide developmental evidence of language learning. This is the type of errors that belong to the scope of *error analysis* (EA).

5.6.2 Error Analysis as a Pedagogic Tool

The claim for using EA as a primary pedagogical tool is based on the argument that EA does not suffer from the inherent limitations of CA in its restrictions to errors caused by interference or transfer. Rather than making an attempt to compare the linguistic features of the learners' L1 and L2, in EA it has been thought to be more relevant to study the learners' performance data so as to infer from it the nature of their competence and the process by which the language elements are acquired. Thus, EA has been able to overcome the drawbacks of CA.

From the insights gained from such investigation, it has been possible to adopt the teaching materials which facilitate the process of acquisition. The learners have been seen as constructing for themselves a grammar of the target language on the basis of linguistic data to which they are exposed and the exposure they receive from classroom teaching. With the newer insights gained from cognitive language learning theory and transformational generative grammar L2 learning has now been seen as a creative process of constructing a system in which learners are trying out hypotheses about the target language from a number of possible sources, limited knowledge of the target language, knowledge of communicative functions, knowledge of the L1 and so on.

5.6.3 Methodology of Error Analysis

Error analysis works by following a systematic methodology beginning with the *identification* or recognition of errors as the first stage of the process. Next, it becomes necessary to provide a *description* of the errors followed by an *explanation* of the errors in terms of their source, cause and significance.

The identification or recognition of errors is possible from samples of language users' speech or composition. For example, we can recognize the following sentences as errors:

1. *We are live in this house.
2. *He was died last year.
3. *He did not found.
4. *We can took him out.
5. *He born in Delhi.
6. *The sky is cover with clouds.

It becomes necessary now to provide a description and explanation of these errors. Let us take up two of them:

(a) **We are live in this house* is not acceptable. The acceptable form is *We live in this house.* It is basically an error of syntax; more specifically, an error in the use of verb form. The error can be classified as over-generalization

(b) **He did not found* is not acceptable. The acceptable form is *He was not found.* It is basically an error in the use of the verb form in passive constructions. The error can be classified as incomplete application to rules.

The basic point now is: why do these errors occur? In his description and explanation of the types of errors given above, Jack C Richards (1971) in his paper titled "A Non-contrastive Approach to Error Analysis" observes that an examination of these errors suggests that they reflect the general characteristics of learning the rules of grammar. These include *over-generalization, ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of rules, false concepts hypothesized* among others. Developmental errors illustrate the learners' attempt to build up hypotheses about features of the English language from their limited experience of it in the classroom or through textbooks.

(a) *Overgeneralization*: The term covers instances where the learner makes errors on the basis of their experience of other structures in the L2. For example **We are walk to school every day* is basically an error in the use of the verb form. The error is the result of a tendency to over-generalize the rules of grammar. Over-generalization generally involves the creation of one unacceptable sentence due to the false generalization of the grammatical input that the learner had acquired.

(b) *Ignorance of rule restriction:* The term covers instances where the learner fails to observe the restrictions of application of rules of grammar to contexts where they do not apply. For example:

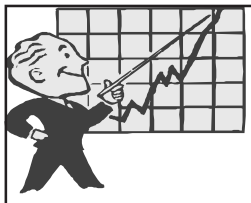
- From *We talked about it*, in the analogy he produces **We discussed about it*.
- From *He said to me*, he produces **He told to me*.
- From *Ask him to do it*, he produces **Make him to do it*.

(c) *Incomplete application of rules*: Under this category we may note the occurrence of structures which show that the learner is in the process of acquiring acceptable forms. For example, earner has acquired the statement form which he uses wrongly in the question form by producing sentences like

- *When you are coming?
- *Why you are late?

(d) *False concepts hypothesised:* Under this category we include errors that are produced from faulty comprehension of distinction in the L2. Examples include

- *He was helped me.
- *She is comes to school regularly.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q4. Write short notes on:

(a) Overgeneralization

(b) Ignorance to rule restriction

(c) Incomplete application of rules



5.7 LET US SUM UP

This unit introduced you to the concept of applied linguistics so as to familiarise you with some of the concerns of this field of study. We defined the term as 'the application of the concepts, principles and theories of linguistics to other related fields of study'. We discussed the scope of applied linguistics in terms of a number of inter-disciplinary fields. Next, we took up issues on L2 learning by taking L1 learning as starting point for the discussion. We brought out the differences between L1 learning and L2 learning by showing that while the L1 is acquired in a natural language learning environment, the L2 is learnt through a conscious process. We discussed the applications of the principles of behaviourism to L2 learning by identifying the behaviourist model of learning. We also discussed the applications of the cognitive theory of L2 learning to initiate a discussion on contrastive analysis and error analysis.



5.8 FURTHER READING

1. Krishnaswami, N. et al (1992). *Modern Applied Linguistics,* Macmillan.
2. McCarthy, Michael. (2001). *Issues in Applied Linguistics,* Cambridge University Press.
3. Richards, Jack C. ed. (1990). *Error Analysis,* Longman, London & New York.

5.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q1.

(a) Applied linguistics may be defined as the field of study involving the application of the concepts, principles and theories of linguistics to other related fields of study. It tries to offer solutions to real-world problems in which language is a central issue.

(b) Applied linguistics is considered inter-disciplinary because of its relationship with several other disciplines notably sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, general linguistics, clinical linguistics (speech therapy), stylistics, discourse analysis, lexicography and so on.

(c) The areas of ELT include learners' need-analysis, syllabus designing, development of textbooks and instructional materials (print and electronic, visual and audio-visual), designing different kinds of tests and remedial teaching materials based on learners' errors.

Ans to Q2.

(a) unconscious

(b) innate

(c) exposed

(d) invent

(e) behavourist

Ans to Q3.

(a) The linguistic features of the learners' L1 and L2 are contrasted.

(b) The effect of one language on the learning of another is referred to as interference. The difficulties faced by learners due to the effect of their L1 while learning the L2 is known by the term L1 interference.

(c) Bilingual refers to a person who knows or uses two languages. Bilingualism is the use of at least two languages either by an individual or a community of speakers.

(d) Multilingual refers to a person who knows and uses three or more languages. Multilingualism is the use of three or more languages by an individual or a language community.

Ans to Q4.

(a) (b) (c): See short notes at 5.6.3



5.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. Give brief answers to the following questions:

(a) Explain the word *applied* in the term "applied linguistics".

(b) State the areas of concern of sociolinguistics.

(c) State the areas of concern of ELT.

(d) Define the term errors.

Q2. Answer the following questions:

(a) Discuss the scope of applied linguistics.

(b) Discuss the term "pull of the mother tongue".

(c) Discuss the criticism against contrastive analysis.

(d) Discuss the methodology of error analysis.

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